

Exhibitions Beyond the Tradeshow Floor

By Sarah Chew

Doors open and a stream of visitors flow in. Around each exhibit they pass, which ones will capture attention, inspire and leave a lasting impression in their minds?

In the past, whenever one thought of exhibition spaces, the images of booths standing side by side with wares proudly displayed would come to mind. Today, it is much more than that. Exhibition organizers and exhibitors are increasingly looking beyond conventional event venues to transform untouched or raw spaces in a bid to envelop audiences in exciting, authentic brand experiences. However, it is easy to get carried away when a venue presents an exclusive factor through its location, history or even architectural elements. Therefore, choosing an appropriate space that is in line with the brand's image and exhibition theme is of paramount importance, as it will further reinforce and add value to the event. From museums and art galleries to airports and heritage sites, these unique spaces open up a world of creativity, flexibility and possibilities in leaving a lasting impression; a brand experience is immediately established from the entrance right through the exhibition.

Exhibitions off-shore are making waves as planners are increasingly seeking spaces beyond the norm. HSBC recently kicked off its 150th anniversary in Hong Kong with a three-part program, which included an interactive exhibition – Made in Hong Kong: Our City, Our Stories – that was staged at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum from March–September 2015. Offering spectacular views of Hong Kong Island's iconic skyline, the Hong Kong Maritime Museum is one of

the city's prized, and most convenient, heritage venues; making it an ideal location to house this special exhibition. Made in Hong Kong: Our City, Our Stories showcases Hong Kong's rich culture and celebrates its robust history. Featuring a series of highly captivating and interactive galleries that harness the latest technology and multimedia platforms, the 372 square-meter mixed media exhibition takes visitors on a unique journey of the city's history through interviews, photographs, film and music from voices across generations.

Another good example of an exhi-

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bition that broke the mould of conventional venues is Marvel's Avengers S.T.A.T.I.O.N. the Exhibition, which kicked off its global tour in Seoul, South Korea, earlier in May. Following the blockbuster “Avengers: Age of Ultron,” fans can continue living the Marvel experience at this traveling exhibition, housed within the War Memorial of Korea. Modelled after a similar display in New York's Times Square, Marvel's Avengers S.T.A.T.I.O.N. is an exciting, immersive

experience that brings visitors into the world of The Avengers. The exhibition allows visitors to participate in a simulated recruitment as if they were being trained as agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. Upon receiving a personalized ID card, visitors will have access to the briefing room, Hulk's laboratory, Iron Man's research institute, Thor's Space Tower and more. Each space includes interactive components that offer insights into the characters and props from the movie.

While the trend of transforming unusual event spaces into stylish venues has opened up more choices, it has also set new challenges for exhibition and event professionals to contend with. Aside from effective communication, risk assessment is critical. From power and security requirements to health and safety regulations, it is crucial that pre-production preparation and repeated technical tests are carried out prior to the event. From pre-event to post-event, executing an exhibition at an unconventional venue is as challenging as it is rewarding. These venues can prompt an audience to think creatively, view the exhibits through new eyes, pay more attention to their surroundings and, ultimately, share about their memorable experiences.

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